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Department of State

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Bray TELEGRAM

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ACTION INR-10

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R 312108Z MAR 81  
FM JCS WASHINGTON DC  
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DIA FOR IR BRANCH

SUBJ: [REDACTED] (U)

THIS IS AN INFO REPORT AND NOT FINALLY EVALUATED INTEL

1. (U) CTRY: BRAZIL (BR)
2. (U) TITLE: AMNESTY, TORTURE, AND INSTITUTIONAL THREATS
3. (U) DATE OF INFO: 810223-810325
4. (U) ORIG: [REDACTED]
5. (U) REQ REFS: [REDACTED]
6. (U) SOURCE: A LARGE NUMBER OF MIDDLE GRADE AND SENIOR FIELD GRADE OFFICERS, REPORTING ACCURATELY REFLECTS THEIR VIEWS.

7. ~~(U)~~ SUMMARY: DISCUSSIONS WITH A WIDE RANGE OF FIELD GRADE OFFICERS SHOW A RESIDUAL ANGER OVER THE FEB CALL FOR AN ACCOUNTING AGAINST MILITARY AND POLICE PERSONNEL WHO PERPETRATED TORTURE DURING THE 1970'S.

8A. ~~(U)~~ DETAILS: THE CALL FOR AN ACCOUNTING OF THOSE ACCUSED OF COMMITTING TORTURE DURING THE 1970'S BROUGHT A SWIFT, BITTER AND PREDICTABLE RESPONSE BY BRAZILIAN ARMY OFFICERS. IN MINAS GERAIS, A NUMBER OF FULL COLONELS LECTURED RO AT LENGTH AND IN VERY HEATED TERMS. ONE OFFICER SAID, "WE REALLY BROUGHT THIS ON OURSELVES. THE PEOPLE WANTED AMNESTY SO WE GAVE THEM AMNESTY AND NOW THE COMMUNISTS AND LEFTISTS ARE BACK AND THE SOBS HAVE STARTED AGAIN." SOME OFFICERS BLAMED THE PRESS SAYING "...ITS THE PRESS, THEY ARE DELIBERATELY TRYING TO BLACKEN THE ARMY'S IMAGE, TO PUT US ON THE DEFENSIVE, TO ASSASSINATE OUR HONOR AND CHARACTER, THAT WAY OUR COURSES OF ACTION WILL BE REDUCED IN THE FUTURE." ANOTHER LAID IT TO THE ATTITUDE OF THOSE WHO CALLED FOR AMNESTY AND THEN DEFINED IT IN THEIR OWN TERMS AFTER ACCEPTING THE GROUND RULES. HE NOTED "...AMNESTY COVERS EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING THAT WENT ON THEN, BUT NOW THE COMMUNISTS SAY IT ONLY APPLIES TO THEIR SIDE AND WE HAVE TO FACE THE MUSIC." ANOTHER WAS INCREDULOUS, HE SAID, "...WE SAVED BRAZIL IT WAS A WAR, A DAMN WAR, HOW DO THESE PEOPLE THINK YOU WIN A WAR, BY BEING NICE?" ONE SENIOR OFFICER SHOOK HIS FINGER IN RO'S FACE AND TURNED RED AS HE EXPLAINED, "...THE COMMUNISTS NEVER GAVE IN, THEY ONLY PLAY BY THEIR RULES AND EVERY CONCESSION IS ASKING FOR TROUBLE." ONE OFFICER WAS CANDID AND ADMITTED THERE WAS REAL CAUSE FOR CONCERN "...IF THIS THING CONTINUED SINCE MANY HIGH RANKING PERSONNEL WOULD BE ON THE SPOT." ANOTHER FIELD GRADER SAID, WHEN DISCUSSING LUIS CARLOS PRESTES'S COMMENT ABOUT POLITICAL TORTURE, "...PRESTES, THAT SOB, LET HIM EXPLAIN AWAY RUSSIA'S POLITICAL TORTURE FIRST AND THEN HE CAN ASK QUESTIONS IN BRAZIL." THE OFFICER THEN WENT ON TO ASK, "DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY CALL RESIDENTS OF SIBERIA? DISSIDENTS"

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8B. ~~(U)~~ ORIG CMTS: THE COMMENTS ABOVE ARE TYPICAL. THE ARMY SENSED AN INSTITUTIONAL THREAT OVER THE TORTURE ISSUE AND WOULD NOT STAND BY AND LET IT COOK ALONG. SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS AND NEWS MAGAZINES HIGHLIGHTED THE MATTER WITH VEILED AND SOMETIMES NOT SO VEILED CALLS FOR RETRIBUTION AGAINST THOSE WHO WERE INVOLVED. ARMY OFFICERS, EVEN THOSE WHOSE HANDS WERE CLEAN, WERE OUTRAGED AT THE THOUGH OF REOPENING THE CASE. THE ARMY COUNTERATTACKED WHEN IN THE SPEECH HONORING THE WAR DEAD OF WORLD WAR II, THE SPEAKER, AN ARMY GENERAL, LINKED THE WW II CASUALTIES WITH THOSE "...WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE COUNTRY WHILE FIGHTING THE INTERNAL ENEMY." THIS SPEECH GIVEN WITH MANY HIGH RANKING DIGNITARIES PRESENT, INCLUDING PRESIDENT FIGUEIREDO, OBVIOUSLY REFLECTED THE ARMY'S VIEW THAT THE EARLY 70'S WAS A WAR AND MARQUIS OF QUEENSBURY'S RULES DID NOT APPLY. AT PRESENT, THE REACTION SEEMS TO BE MOSTLY ANGER WITH MORE HEAT THAN LIGHT. BY IF THE ISSUES RESURGES, THE ARMY CAN BE EXPECTED TO TAKE A HARDER LINE. THIS TIME THE STAKES ARE PERSONAL CAREERS AND MILITARY HONOR AND THAT'S A POWERFUL INCENTIVE TO DRAW THE LINES HARD AND SURE.

9. (U) PROJ NO: NONE
  10. (U) COLL MGMT CODES: AC
  11. (U) SPEC INST: NONE DIRC-NO
  12. (U) PREP BY: [REDACTED]
  13. (U) APP BY: [REDACTED]
  14. (U) REQ EVAL: NO REL TO: NA
  15. (U) ENCL: NONE
  16. (U) DIST BY ORIG: NONE
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